

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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P R 081000Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3594
INFO AMEMBASSY ATHENS

UNCLAS BEIRUT 1581

DEPT ALSO PASS AID

ATHENS FOR RTDO

E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: EAID LE US
SUBJ: REQUEST FOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR RECONSTRUCTION
AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD

1. IN A MEETING ON APRIL 6, MOHAMMAD ATALLAH, NEWLY APPOINTED DIRECTOR GENERAL OF LEBANON'S RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD (RDB) ASKED DCM IF USG COULD HELP HIM RECRUIT IMMEDIATELY AN OUTSTANDING MANAGEMENT CONSULTANT OR SENIOR EXECUTIVE TO ASSIST HIM IN ORGANIZING THE BOARD. HE EXPLAINED THAT THE RDB IS TO BE A PERMANENT GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION, REPLACING THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING, AND WILL HANDLE THE PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS FOR BOTH THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS.

2. ATALLAH SAID HE NEEDS SOMEONE WHO CAN STUDY THE DECREE SETTING UP THE BOARD AND WORK WITH HIM IN TRANSLATING IT INTO A SERIES OF DRAFT LAWS AND REGULATIONS THAT WILL DETERMINE THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE BOARD, THE COUNCIL OF
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MINISTER, THE OTHER MINISTRIES, LOCAL GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS, AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR. IDEALLY, HE WOULD LIKE TO HAVE SUCH A PERSON FOR 9-12 MONTHS BUT A SHORTER PERIOD WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE IF HE COULD FIND THE RIGHT MAN. THE CONSULTANT, WHO MIGHT COME FROM EITHER THE PUBLIC OR PRIVATE SECTOR, NEED NOT SPEND ALL HIS TIME IN LEBANON BUT COULD COME FOR SHORT PERIODS OF A WEEK OR TWO DURING THIS

PERIOD. THE ESSENTIAL IS SPEED. THE RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD HAD BEEN CHARGED WITH THE BASIC TASK OF REBUILDING THE COUNTRY BUT IT COULD NOT START TO WORK UNTIL IT IS ORGANIZED.

3. ATALLAH SAID THAT ALTHOUGH HE HAD BEEN ON THE JOB ONLY TWO DAYS, HE HAD ALREADY RECEIVED SEVERAL OFFERS FROM MANAGEMENT CONSULTANT FIRMS (HE IMPLIED BRITISH AND FRENCH) BUT HE PREFERRED TO SEEK A HIGHLY QUALIFIED AMERICAN EXPERT FIRST. HE DID NOT WANT TO ASK FOR HELP FROM THE UN OR THE WORLD BANK, HE SAID, BECAUSE THAT WOULD TAKE TOO LONG. HE FIRST ASKED THAT THE USG FINANCE SUCH A CONSULTANT, BUT SAID THAT IF THIS WAS IMPOSSIBLE, HE WOULD BE PREPARED TO PAY FOR THE RIGHT MAN.

4. COMMENT: THE RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD HAS BEEN DESIGNED BY PRESIDENT SARKIS AND PRIMIN AL-HOSS TO PAY A VITAL ROLE IN THE REVIVAL OF THE LEBANESE ECONOMY. MR. ATALLAH IS HIMSELF AN EXPERIENCED ECONOMIST BUT HE OBVIOUSLY FEELS THE NEED FOR SOMEONE WITH BROADER EXPERIENCE TO ASSIST HIM IN SETTING UP HIS NEW ORGANIZATION. IN PUTTING FORWARD THIS REQUEST, HE STRESSED TWO POINTS: THE MAN HE NEEDS MUST BE UNUSUALLY WELL QUALIFIED (LEBANON HAS A GREAT MANY EXPERTS OF ITS OWN) AND HE MUST BE AVAILABLE IMMEDIATELY, "YESTERDAY," TO USE ATALLAH'S WORD. A TRULY DISTINGUISHED MEMBER OF THE IESC MIGHT FILL THE BILL.

5. ACTION REQUESTED: EMBASSY WOULD APPRECIATE ANY SUGGESTIONS DEPT OR AID CAN PROVIDE ON HOW SUCH A PERSON CAN
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BE FOUND. THIS APPEARS TO US TO BE AN EXCELLENT CASE FOR SECTION 607 OR 611 FUNDING. PLEASE ADVISE WHETHER THIS IS POSSIBLE OR IF WE SHOULD INFORM ATALLAH THAT GOL WILL HAVE TO PAY. TO BE RESPONSIVE TO ATALLAH REQUEST WE SHOULD PROVIDE HIM WITHIN A WEEK THE NAMES OF CANDIDATES WHO COULD ARRIVE FOR A PRELIMINARY CONSULTATION BEFORE THE END OF APRIL. PARKER

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